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PH *ELMWOOD*
A POEM
BY
JOHN HENRY VOSBURG

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RALPH ELMWOOD.



RALPH ELMWOOD:

A P O E M.

BY

JOHN HENRY VOSBURG.



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RALPH ELMWOOD.

I.

TO-DAY have Alfred Morion and Edith Hart
been wed,

And in the little village church the sacred rites were
said ;

Here, standing on her father's porch, we see the
gothic spire

That draws a flash of glory from the sunset's dying
fire.

Grouped round with shadow-echoes, trees, the pray-
ers of Nature stand,

And western winds are murmuring sweet tales of
fairy land.

On one side is the garden, where all hues the flowers
wear

The sun can paint, all odors breathe, that southern
breezes bear.

Here, twinkling through a mist of leaves, the red ripe
cherries gleam,

To right a knoll where trees rejoice in the sun's last
full-eyed beam ;

In front the lawn is greenly spread to where a high
bank falls ;

A meadow stretches, tree-embossed, to the river's
leafy walls ;

There winds the Susquehanna, in soft shadows trea-
suring

The beauties that the groves and sky upon its surface
fling ;

Short-curving, and so close embowered, it glimmers
here and there

Like verdure-cinctured lakes ; afar to left there
sparkles fair

A village, and this side are fields of grain and mea-
dows green ;

To right the flashing river in a straighter course is
seen ;

A bridge shuts out its farthest view, scarce seen, and
on the shore

A mill, and we can faintly hear the mill-dam's mellowed roar.

The glories of the sunset fade along the hill-tops now,
And twilight's fairer children come to deck Night's
regal brow ;

She reigns and scatters gems of dew, and from her
silver bowl

And diamond goblets sprinkles light to cheer Earth's
fainting soul.

The wedding-guests that lounged about the garden
or the lawn,

Or on the porch, have fled the dark, and in the house
are gone ;

The lamps invite us to exchange the night-enveloped
scene

For the talk, the mirth, and music of festivity's demesne.

Here are gathered men and women, old and young,
from far and near,—

Some think marriage food for laughter, others greet
it with a tear ;

Some sterile natures blossom not with either fear or
hope ;

To some experience shows the road of life an easy
slope :

But all, we hope, wish blessings on the happy, fair,
and young,

Whose union gives each mind a theme, a goal to every
tongue.

The bride, we call her beautiful, but do her not the
wrong

To try to limn her features with the pencil of our
song ;

As a star dissolves in moonlight, so does she seem
melting now

In a true and holy love whose radiance halos round
her brow ;

The bridegroom sits beside her, and his kindled face
reveals

The opening of love's heaven at the breaking of the
seals ;

The golden gate of life to him this day has set ajar,
And the future glows, a flaming sun, that was a twink-
ling star.

Talk rises and increases, like a brooklet fed by
springs,

That swells and broadens as it runs, and ever louder
sings ;

The laughter breaks in ripples or cascades, and music's sound

Puts life and motion into feet that chase the graces
round.

Now mirth awakes and antics in droll games, but
some, from age,

Or a sober mood look on, or in a quiet talk engage.

Let's join the group that gathers round the village
clergyman,

Whose mind has power with vision clear the page of
truth to scan.

Here's Esther, Alfred's sister, and her soft eyes' loving power

Her spirit's wealth diffuses like the perfume of a
flower :

And near her sits Ralph Elmwood, who looks neither
man nor boy,

The fitful light that fires his eye seems keenest grief
or joy ;

A soul uncertain of its aim, that often mounts and
soars,

Then tempest-driven, hovers where volcanic passion
roars.

Note this old woman, in whose face life's pen has
written *scold*,

In lines half anger, and half grief, by patience not
controlled,—

You know reproof, that should be but a gentle sum-
mer shower,

From her would burst with thunder and the tempest's
unchecked power,—

Or this one, Edith's mother, with a heavenward
yearning face

That shows life's ripples silvered with the foam of
spirit grace.

RALPH.

It may be marriages are made in heaven,

But they are often very ill-contrived,—

Because of poor material perhaps.

OLD WOMAN.

No doubt of that; but what can you expect?

These giddy girls and boys think marriage like

A play or dance; they will learn better in time.

MADAM HART.

If it seems like a play or dance to them,
'Tis pleasant ; why not let them think so still ?

OLD WOMAN.

Because there's something serious to be done—
A dreadful future to prepare for. Life
That's danced away is not made fit for heaven.

MADAM HART.

Why should the young make life a serious thing
Before its sorrows touch them, or of this,
The happiest scene of earthly life to most,
And if in contemplation happier
Than in fruition, need we try to spoil
The joy that, although fanciful, is real ?

PASTOR.

We cannot always know the real in life.
What seems but fancy sometimes is the truth,
Clearer than mental vision can behold ;
For reason's ken is narrow, rimmed by hills
Of manifest reality, while truth

Is bounded but by God. The sky is near,
So near us that we breathe it constantly,
Though only in blue distance evident.
All hopes and aspirations are of truth,
So they be pure ; all pleasures, too, are real,
Which on that rock are founded. Let us then
Reject no blossom Heaven sends to us
Because it seems not dyed in reason's hues.
The practical would strip our Eden clear
Of flowers and fruits, and leave but common grains.

RALPH.

Yes ; and dig up the tree of life, and that
Of knowledge, because casting too much shade,
And plant potatoes in their place ; or dam
And stagnate life's clear-flowing stream to turn
A mill to grind their corn, which they will use
In place of fruits and manna heaven-sent.

OLD WOMAN.

I don't know what you mean ; but this I know,
Not many reach the kingdom of the blest.

RALPH.

Shut up your high-walled kingdom, then, and guard
With flaming swords ; we you reject will make
Elsewhere our own Confederacy of Love.

MADAM HART.

Ralph ! Ralph ! do not make light of sacred things !

PASTOR.

Kindle your beacon fires of truth, but not
With sacred fuel : do not stand too near,
Or they will dazzle rather than reveal.

ESTHER.

Miss Link will sing for us.

RALPH.

Then I must help her stuff the dragon's jaws.
What do you name your song ?

MISS LINK.

'Tis called

THE FLIGHT OF LOVE.

The mists of the mountain,
The foam of the fountain,
 The leaves, and the snow,
The birds and the flowers,
The sunshiny hours,
 They come and they go ;
And love will vanish like the day.

Love's coming or going
Surpasses our knowing,
 But what if he go ?
Let's hope for his coming
While merrily humming
 This song we all know,
Next Spring the birds will fly this way.

RALPH.

I doubt not Alfred holds your ditty false ;
He thinks love like a star, whose song, begun
Upon creation's morning, rings forever.

ALFRED.

We cast no shadow with the midday sun
Clear overhead.

MISS LINK.

Ralph, sing us something merry !

ESTHER.

Do, Ralph !

RALPH.

Well, I will give you

A PASTORAL.

'Twas evening, and my work was done ;
She took her pail to milk the cow ;
I stood and gazed at the setting sun ;
She sang a song like a bird on a bough,
Which put an end to my dreaming.

I watched her wade through the tangled grass,
And wished that I were a clover-head,
To kiss the foot of the red-cheeked lass,
And then to die on a grassy bed,
My life going out in fragrance.

She sat her down on the milking stool,
Two white streams flowed her soft hands through,

And I thought as she milked, that every pull
Was at my heart-strings, and she drew
My soul out through her fingers.

My feet were moved, I knew not how ;
I went, and to the maid I said,
“ You’ve filled your pail, you’ve drained the cow,
You’ve drained my heart, and filled my head ;”
She smiled, and then I kissed her.

The cow was scared, and kicked over the pail ;
The maiden sadly looked at me ;
“ The milk is spilled ; so your love will fail ! ”
Then I, “ But you love’s fount will be,
We shall never want a heartful.”

OLD WOMAN.

Such flowers grow in your Eden, I suppose.

RALPH.

No, that’s an earthly song. I’ll have no mirth
Within my Paradise,—it is too gross.

MADAM HART.

Will you abolish weddings too ?

RALPH.

O, no! But truly loving souls are raised
High above mirthful influences, as heaven
Seems far and stable over fickle clouds.

ESTHER.

You doubt that love can dwell in humble hearts,
Ringed round with common scenes?

RALPH.

I know it grows like flowers, and fruits, and grains,
The rarest in best-cultivated soils.

MADAM HART.

I'm sure the purest, most enduring love
May dwell with those whose culture is but small,
So true religion has prepared the heart.

PASTOR.

The Father gives his portion unto each,
And, be it more or less, 'tis all he needs.
Love may take different hues in diverse climes.

Whatever is of spirit born is pure,
But takes a color from the things of earth.
Clear sunlight shows no tints, but gives a hue
To earthly things, according to their kind ;
So human love is but an alchemy
That makes each show his colors like a prism.

ESTHER.

Is all so white in spirit-land ? I dread
The thought of dwelling in a hueless realm,
Where we must stalk like spectres, moonlight pale,
Not even casting shadows.

PASTOR.

Each realm may have its own hues differing.
The perfect state will be all glorious,
Perhaps with colors to suit spirit eyes
That can behold a brightness unconceived.

OLD WOMAN.

'Tis time to go !

SEVERAL.

Yes, we must go !

RALPH.

One song from Esther ere we part.

SEVERAL.

Yes, do sing !

ESTHER.

Then I will sing for you a

GOOD-NIGHT SONG.

The day is passed, like a deed of power,
And like its memory starlight glows,
And, with the moon, the festive hour
Is fading now to a happy close.

Good-night !

The morrow will bring some new delight.

Let memory garner whatever of gay

Or true the evening time has brought,
And may the light of another day

Make of each dream-bud a blossomed thought !

Good-night !

May your slumbers be sweet, and your visions bright !

May echoes of each pleasing song

Your ears have heard, ring through your souls
Melodiously the whole night long,

Till a waking note the robin trolls.

Good-night !

May bird-songs wake you with morning's light !

May fairest sprites, from golden bowls,

Bedew you with the chrism of love,
And dream-flowers blossom all over your souls
Like stars on the azure curtain above.

Good-night !

May angels guard you till morning's light !

II.

The maiden morn had made the landscape gay
With floods of sunshine from the fount of day,
When Esther greeted earth with purer light
From eyes whence gushed in streams her spirit's
might,

And fell on nature like the diamond dew.
She softly left the house, and, passing through
The gate, moved gently o'er the swarded ground,
Through the ranked orchard, on to a tree-topped
mound,

Where hickory, and oak, and butternut
Branched burning sunshine out, and closely shut
Her in retirement's sweet and sacred goal,
As dropping eyelids hide a bashful soul.
But on one side the river's gentle face
Smiled through the parted trunks, and a rounded
space,

Leaf-bordered, let the farther hills be seen,
The hazy distance purpling their soft green.
Here Esther sat, and let her soul drink rills
Of song the birds poured out through silvery bills,
Or watched them deftly flitting here and there,
Happily anxious with their nestling's care.

Now she escapes the shadow's sweet embrace,
And flashes onward into open space.
She passes by the soft-eyed cows, who raise
Their heads from feeding, and with tender gaze
Look blessings on her, whose kind heart they know

As rich and sweet as their own udders' flow ;
The meek sheep whitely dot the pasture near,
The frisky lambs too ignorant for fear.
A fence now bars her path at the hillside's base,
Which Esther climbs with ease and maiden grace,
And drops like an autumn leaf on the lower side ;
She crosses through tall grass the meadow wide ;
The brown bees hum around the clover-beds,
The meadow-lilies bow their lovely heads,
The lark springs up and heavenward hurls his song,
The air sighs love-words as she moves along.

She gains a thicket, where a little brook
Here meets the river—a small bowered nook,
Where clematis and wild-grape overgrow
The willows, and the streamlet's tinkling flow
Makes melody that soothes the soul to rest ;
She sinks on mother Earth's dear loving breast,
Opens a gilded volume she has brought,
And drinks refreshment from the poet's thought.
O happy poet ! Could your spirit know
How thus its beams on her sweet nature flow,
Making new flowers in that rich soil upspring,
A diamond blessing such a thought would bring,

To charm thy troubles, if still bound to earth,
And if the grave has given thee a new birth,
Yet still shut out from bliss for following here
Phantoms of darkness ; like the holy tear
Of penitence,—the choicest gift to heaven—
The thoughts thy lays to this sweet maid have given
Must make the warder the gemmed gate unbar,
And flash thee welcome like a falling star.

Ralph Elmwood from the hayfield saw the maid
When yielded by the grove's reluctant shade,—
With longing eyes pursued her farther course,
And felt her draw him with resistless force.
He followed, and his memory wandered back
Along his life's yet dim and goalless track,
And saw where her loved hand had planted flowers.
Ere yet he knew a touch of manhood's powers—
A ten years' boy—he felt the might of love
At sight of her within his bosom move,
And rend him till his heart's blood fluttering flew
Into his face, and he apart withdrew,
All trembling with the flame he could not quell
Till Poesie had brought her magic spell.

His was no frivolous soul, though oft his mood
Compelled him from the narrow path of good
To sport in dangerous ways, and court the powers
Less spirits meet with terror in dark hours.

He reached the sanctuary of the maid,
But paused awhile before he dared invade
Her solitude ; then to his heart he spoke,
“ There is no privacy in love,” and broke
The spell of awe, and drew the boughs aside,
And looked ;—the book she read is at her side,
Fallen from her willess hand with ruffled leaves ;
Her head leans on her hand, her bosom heaves
With zephyrs wafted from the land of sleep.
His spirit springs to meet hers in a deep
And eager glance that pierces through the lids
That veil her soul’s sweet outlooks ; Love forbids
A longer tarrying in the land of dreams :
Her soul returns in haste ; its ardent beams
Roll up the blue-veined curtains from her eyes,
And their two spirits meet ; timid surprise
Hers shows at first, but, gaining her full height,
Ralph sees no anger in its calm pure light.

The two have left the bower, and now attain
The river's bank ; here, fastened by a chain
To alder-bushes, is a little boat,
In which they seat themselves, and smoothly float
Along the river's clear and buoyant plane,
On which the sunlight sparkles like a rain,
The drops rebounding, spattering their dazed eyes.
Ralph, with his arms' full force now swiftly plies
The oars, now resting, lets the gentle tide
Move the boat slowly on, while o'er its side
They watch the ripples o'er the surface run,
Or see the fish flash back a watered sun.
Among small willowy islands now they go,
And pass to where the river's swifter flow,
More shallow, dashes with a fretful roar.
Too strong the current now to stem with oar,
So Ralph leaps out, and tugging at the chain,
Draws on the boat, until once more they gain
A placid deep, then, climbing in, they glide
With thrilling swiftness down the rapid tide.

Black clouds are moving up the darkened sky,
Grumbling and glancing wrath ; the shadows fly
Across the land, till all the scene is dim :

Large drops prelude the shower's murmured hymn
Which soon blends sweetly with the thunder's bass.
The pair have reached an isle, and with swift pace
Move to the centre, where a large elm stands,
The islet's sovereign ; all the circling strands
Are bowered with smaller trees embraced by vines.
And here, in one of Love's most sacred shrines,
At the elm's foot, they sit, and while the rain
Drums on the sounding sward a soothing strain,
And the winds with it weave a symphony,
A chord of love runs through all tremblingly,—
An answering note ; then, with a rich, clear swell,
A full-souled harmony antiphonal.

The rain had ceased, and hand-in-hand the twain
Had reached their boat, the river crossed again.
They parted, for their ways home differed ; he
Soon paused upon a knoll where he could see
Her course whose spirit in his bosom burned :
Just ere she gained her home she stopped and turned,
And saw Ralph standing in a grove's deep shade ;
The sun triumphantly his power displayed,
Far in the east retreating thunder lowed,
And with its banded dyes a rainbow glowed.

III.

How life and motion meet
And surge and clash in the city street,
With the patter and clatter of feet,
The rattling, and rolling, and rumbling of wheels,
In one unceasing roar that peals,
Anear discordantly,
Yet from afar with a linked harmony ;
Anear with the jangling noise of war,
And yet, to a dweller on a star
Who had ears to hear a sound so far,
The voice of our humanity
Would rise a polished melody.
A joyful thing it is to know
That the finest sounds the farthest go,
And all the tones that afar are heard
Are sweet as the notes of a warbling bird.

What a wealth of metal, wood, and stone,
And brick, and glass, together thrown
By human hands, to make the walls
That hem our path, the costly halls

Of trade and commerce that, with whirl
Unceasing, draw, and then outhurl
The gathered treasures of every clime,
The spoils of all the fields of time.
There are marts where everything is sold
That man will give in exchange for gold.

What a hurry, and worry, and clamor, and press,
And what diverse styles of mien and dress
In this wonderful human wilderness !
Here big and little, sad and gay,
Are moving on in earnest or play :
There are short and tall, and lean and stout,
And their voices scale from a sigh to a shout.
There are people from country, and people of town,
Manners of gentle, and dandy, and clown ;
Here totters old age, with life perplexed,
And childhood wishes, and wonders "What next ?"
There are crooked, and lame, and feeble, and blind,
And thieves and beggars of every kind :
Here you may purchase an apple or song ;
There peddlers and bootblacks are sauntering along ;
Policemen loiter, and newsboys shout,
And women look sweet and preachers devout ;

There are men with devilish instruments,
And we send to their mills more curses than cents;
There are persons in fashion's most costly attire,
And wretches too squalid for vice to hire;
There are faces white, pink, brown, and black,
And yellow, and mottled,—demoniac,
Stupid, and average, and beaming with mind,
Fair and ugly, and harsh and kind;
There are beautiful faces in which we read
With worshipping eyes love's heavenly creed,—
There are others whose vicious depths repel
The shuddering gaze like a glimpse of hell;
Each one from the book of life is a leaf,
A record of passion from joy to grief;
O let us ponder these pages well!
There is no truth that they do not tell.

Call this a garden of men,
Where flowers and weeds together grow!
Or name it humanity's den,
Where to share the prey the beasts all go,—
The lion, and jackal, and dog, and fox;
Be it carcass of hare, or sheep, or ox,

The lion still claims the lion's share,
But the fox, with his sanctimonious air,
Contrives to steal enough for his fill,—
The others may gnaw the bones, if they will.

Yet here are the proud results of mind,
And the waves of restless humanity grind
The pebbles till each reveals its worth,
Rounded and freed from superfluous earth.
Shake grains together, the heaviest rise
Above the lesser in weight and size.
As the moon and stars' united light
Makes all things clear on a cloudless night,
So do the mingled rays of soul
Illumine more the larger whole.
To the noblest truths man is not dead,
And the heart claims more than the body or head :
Earth-sprung, but growing heavenward, higher
Than all else he builds, see the sacred spire !
And topping all sounds that upward swell,
Is the peal of the worship-calling bell.
Who leads the universal choir,
Knows that all notes towards bliss aspire,
And no doubt we shall all, in a higher prime,
Find what now seem harsh a perfect chime.

Along the street of the city now
See Alfred pass ; his unlined brow,
His manful lip and eye serene,
His upright form, and earnest mien,
Show one who finds this life a plain
For grazing, not for fear's weak pain ;
Who here seeks food for his working soul
While passing on to a higher goal.
The waves of this turbulent human sea,
He views with firm tranquillity ;
Securely towards his haven he rides,
Helped onwards by the waves and tides.
He sees no sight, and hears no sound,
Of all that surge and clamor round,
But lets his mind serenely rove
In flowery scenes of hope and love.
He glances upward—the loving blue
Meets his with a gaze so pure and true,
It seems to reproach man's hurry and strife
With hints of a calmer, happier life.
Among the wheels he crosses now,
Some one he meets demands a bow ;
He turns again, and under his feet
He hears the pulse of an engine beat ;

He climbs a stair, and enters a room
Where sunlight strives with city gloom.

Here Alfred fits with words the thought
In the tumult of life to the surface brought ;
Each unknown thing Time drops in his flight,
He strives to show whether wrong or right ;
He dares to lift the future's veil,
Advancing time to greet or assail ;
He judges men's acts to praise or blame,
And illumines thought with fancy's flame ;
He echoes the popular speech less crude,
His *we* as the voice of the multitude.

When the task of the passing day is wrought,
Homeward he follows his eager thought,
Where joy has spread a glorious feast :
And the stream of love has so increased
That, the waste of its overflow to prevent,
A third, a tiny vessel, is sent.
And Alfred is happy with wife and child,
To all that is now reconciled
By the boon whose rainbow-arch seems given
To bridge his hopes from earth to heaven.

IV.

ALFRED TO RALPH.

Yes, come to the city, if you will,
And chase your destiny, that still
Must fly your wishes till you make tame
Your spirit,—then she will be the same.
Some post there is in the age's strife
For you to fight your battle of life.
You wish a place among lords of song
To whom our praise and love belong:
If you to them could humbly apply,
Your prayer, perhaps, they might not deny:
But lackeys guard the halls of fame,
And admit not those of unknown name.
If your dress is like many entered before,
And so well known, they may open the door;
And gold will dazzle, and favor bribe
The partly-developed monkey tribe.

If your soul is free from fear and doubt,
You may soar and sing your heart-full out.

You'll be shot at by sportsmen critics, who aim
At whatever flies as proper game.
As your melody jars or delights his mood,
Each will hail your notes as bad or good.
One who is trained to like the song
Of the thrush will declare the bobolink's wrong ;
One who admires the spiral flight
Of the hawk will vow the lark's not right ;
And the ape will chatter, in wisest way,
Of the parrot, because his plumage is gay.
'Twould hurt you, no doubt, to see the flowers
Your heart has nourished in holiest hours
Trampled upon by the hoofs of swine,—
But even that grief can be made divine.

Time and labor will surely bring
A sceptre to every true-born king :
All words of truth and beauty, the days
To come will set to notes of praise.
Whether your reward will come late or soon,
In manhood's sun, or age's moon,
No one can tell, nor if from the bread
You cast on the waters your heart will be fed.
Yet it may be best to scatter, although
On earth you reap not what you sow.

Obeys the inner voice, and trusts
The Power who rules, that what is just
Will be your portion, and what you give
As truth requires shall die or live.
When desire is raging to be free,
And seeks the outlet poesy,
Restrain not, or fierce unrest will tear
Your struggling soul, like a smothered prayer,
And the passion which you to song deny
Will be spent in sin, or in anguish die.

V.

Alfred one evening, in a gilded fane
Of music, bared his parched soul to the rain
Of sweet sounds poured from voice and instrument,
That to a tale of love their spell had lent.
He gazes on a scene both weird and fair :
The lights on gay parterres of fashion glare,
And thrilling eyes flash back the joyous rays
Of melody with more enchanting blaze.
Upon the stage a varied scene unwinds
The mazes of a plot that deftly binds

The flowers of passion, which ask music's tone
Their subtle tints of meaning to make known.
The various, thickly-strewn orchestral notes
Mix with the gushings of melodious throats,
Through solo, dialogue, and chorus, told
With Italy's round words of vowelled gold.

The tale was of a maid who loved so well
That, by this passion heightened, even the hell
Of jealousy was smoothed, and, cleared from guilt,
An altar for self-sacrifice she built.
She died that he she loved might know a higher
Delight than she could give ; that, from the fire
In which her heart consumed, the dove of peace
Might spring, and from all fears give him release.
The music, moaning with her dying voice,
Changed when that ceased, as if it would rejoice
In love's pure triumph. Alfred met a glance,
Thrown from above, that held his soul in trance
Wherein the future showed an unguessed page.
The eyes, till then unknown, were from the stage
Just turned, and in their misty heaven he saw
The scene's whole soul impressed ; they seemed to
draw

Him toward a higher life than yet he knew :—
'Twas but a flash, yet in it he saw, through
Those eyes, a boon the future held for him,
But shadowed by a sorrow vague and dim.

And soon a cloud of woe obscures his soul,
The mist of death that hides from sight its goal.
The wife who queened his hopes has gone away,
Taking the joy-dyes from the light of day.
When she heard Death's step near, and on her face
His taper's pale light made its awful trace,
She knew that through the darkness she must go,
And yearning towards Alfred's look of woe,
She said ; " Dear, tarry in this world of strife,
While I begin a new and happier life.
A voice speaks to my soul that love has done
Through me its work for you ; its course is run
For earth, and you need more than I can give
From henceforth ; but my love shall live
In that celestial realm to which I go,
And in a purer atmosphere will grow,
And thus keep pace with yours ; and when you come
Its brightness shall content you in that home."

VI.

Here rolls the ocean, so boundless and glorious,
Sounding its idyls and pæans victorious,
Moving forever in awful immensity,
Voicing its vague, never-resting intensity :
Green blends with blue, earth's and heaven's flor-
idity,
White foam above hints of starlight's lucidity.

Warding the sun's raining lances unfailingly ;
Telling the doom of its victims bewailingly ;
Dimpling with pleasure when soft showers are patter-
ing ;
Frowning in anger when wild winds are scattering :
Showing in calm hours a smiling benevolence,
Roused into anger a fearful malevolence :
When clouds are hiding the stars madly wondering,
Deep from below to the deep above thundering,—
Clouds calling down to the waves they are darkening,
Waves to their wild words on tiptoe are hearkening ;
Cloud-cutting flashes the heavens are lightening,
Phosphoric gleams the rough waters are brightening ;

Wildly the sea-stars, the white ships, are wandering,
Where their bright brothers on high are gone pondering :

Mocking the sky above, wave on wave following,
Into such concaves the ocean is hollowing :
Tidings from sea to sky swift winds are carrying,
Shouting their messages, eager, untarrying ;
Cloud-hurling tempests through awed heavens fulminate,
Till their fierce passions in silent rage culminate.

Loving the land with a passion exuberant,
Kissing its feet that in capes are protuberant ;
Fondling it sometimes in tenderness tearfully,
Mouthing it over in happiness cheerfully :
Begging affection with accents pathological,
Singing her passion in numbers poetical ;
Murmuring her fondness in tones deep and tremulous :

Knowing the sun's love for earth ever emulous ;
Still of the truth of her lover too curious,
Roused into jealousy thoughtlessly furious :
Shrieking with rage to her bright rival needlessly,
Chiding her darling for faithlessness heedlessly ;

Frightened winds rush o'er their courses aerial,
Clouds, in dark sadness, weep showers funereal.
Towards her sweet children, the islands so beautiful,
Gentle and passionate, fickle and dutiful ;
On her fond bosom their heads softly pillowing,
With her moist lips tender lullabys billowing.

Round the calm shores crowd the waves wild and
clamorous,
Raging or sobbing in mood madly amorous ;
Seeking the moon with an impulse quotidian,
Rising to gaze on her glory meridian,
Following after, howe'er her steps deviate,
Hoping her calm smile their woes may alleviate ;
Fondly aspiring, in love and in gratitude,
Towards what they deem the bright source of beati-
tude.

Ever the rivers are hurrying greedily,
Wishing to share the sea's wider joys speedily :
Fretting at boundaries narrow and sinuous,
Telling their great hopes in murmurs continuous ;
Still of the joys of the future too credulous,
Chasing their wishes with energy sedulous ;

Trees bending over, in beauty adorable,
Whisper reproof of unrest so deplorable.

Glorious sea ! whether peaceful or tragical,
Still is thy spell o'er us wondrously magical ;
Awed, we adore thy great beauty seraphical ;
Thrilling, we hearken thy epic so graphical,—
Listen thy cadences, lyric, habitual,
Grand as the swell of a sky-soaring ritual.
Answering the stars in their courses ethereal,
Speaking to earth with a tone magisterial,
Telling the story of times immemorial ;
Heavenward rings thy voice mediatorial.
Hymning the hopes of a future millennial,
Gladdening our hearts with a beauty perennial ;
Still thou art ever a faithful chronologer,
Voice of the future, a truthful astrologer ;
Had we but ears for thy sentient vernacular,
Much could we learn from thy sayings oracular ;
Writ on thy surface, a volume historical,
Teaches great lessons with words metaphorical.
Reign thou forever, in glory monarchical !
Be thy sway owned as a power hierarchical !

Man may adore, but with heart unregenerate,
Humbled and trembling thy beauty must venerate !

South of Manhattan and its lower bay,
Where restless Ocean owns the Land's firm sway,
The Land out-reaches a caressing arm,
To soothe her tumults, and her fears to charm.
The arm is Sandy Hook ; the shore's breast we
Call Neversink, on which the sighing Sea
Is fain her loving head, the bay, to rest,
While smiles and murmurs her deep joy attest.

Northward the steepled city lies ; below,
Each side the Narrows, a fort warns a foe
That iron Death here keeps a watchful lair ;
There's Staten Island with its villas fair,
There Coney, and there stretch Long Island's shores ;
Nearer, the bay, where steam, and winds, and oars
Move vessels to and fro ; in front the sea
With ships and billows roving fair and free.
Southward is Long Branch ; from this sightly place
We see the river Shrewsbury in its grace
Curve through the fields for many lovely miles,
Where petted Nature grateful promise smiles.

Here on the wooded promontory stands
The long-walled lighthouse, whose two upraised
hands

Bear lamps that hail the mariner afar,
And guide him duly as the polar star.
Along the beach gay pleasure-followers stray,
And bathers with embracing billows play.

Here by the sea has Alfred come to sip
Reviving draughts from nature's cup, and dip
In her renewing fountain. Years have passed
Since with black grief his skies were overcast,
And his life-blood was chilled. He late has been
So near Death's door that he has looked within,
And caught the hue of ghosts, and noxious airs
From that dread realm have poisoned him like cares,
And racked his frame as with the power of age.
Hope and despair their furious war yet wage
In his torn breast, and still his wounded soul
Moans for the balm of love to make it whole.
He lives because his life-work is not done,
Nor yet the place beyond death's boundary won,
Where souls he longs to know his own may greet
And welcome gladly to their blissful seat.

One other tie binds him to life, the string
Of love for his one child, a winsome thing,
Merry and thoughtful both,—a clinging heart
That draws the sweet from all with native art.

Now, hand-in-hand, he and the maiden rove,
And taste the placid beauty of a grove
Upon the hill: the murmurs of the sea
Come soft as hummings of a wandering bee:
They sit, and Alfred's roving thought along
The child's talk runs like a scarce-heeded song.

VIOLA.

You are tired, papa. 'Here's a better seat.
Oh! isn't it beautiful! There is some moss;
How soft and downy! Yonder are some flowers!
I'll run and get them. Did the fairies make
These flowers?

ALFRED.

I cannot tell.

VIOLA.

You told me once how fairies made the flowers,
And painted them with sunshine. Wasn't it true?
Why can't I see the fairies?

ALFRED.

Everything beautiful you'll see some time,
If you are good enough.

VIOLA.

Then I will try to be so very good.
Are any fairies in this grove?

ALFRED.

I do not know.

VIOLA.

Tell me a story, papa. There's a kiss.
Tell me a funny story. Don't that bird
Sing sweetly! If I could but catch him now,
And put him in a cage!

ALFRED.

What will you have; a story of a mermaid?

VIOLA.

Yes, if you please. Mermaids live in the sea,
And comb their long hair all the time, and look
In glasses, and sing sweetly, do they not?

ALFRED.

Yes, but some of them once lived in a lake,
And so their queen was called

LACROCINA.

By the side of a lake did a little maid dwell,
In a neat little house, in a green grassy dell,
 'Twas the merry and sweet Tantalina ;
In the lake lived the mermaids who loved the child
 well,
 And the fairest was Queen Lacrocina.

By the lake stood the child on a still summer's night,
And she looked at the moon's face so round and so
 white,
 Away down in the clear water shining ;
And she thought, " If the moon were a boat new and
 bright,
 All of silver, with blue silken lining,

" With some white swans to draw it, and I could but
 ride
All about, with a fairy to sit by my side—

One not larger than my baby brother—
Who would sing me sweet songs as we moved o'er
the tide,

O, I'd love her as much as my mother !''

Then she threw a small stone in the lake, and the face
Of the moon seemed to laugh, but the laughter gave
place

To a smile so delightful, she thought it
Must be some wondrous fairy so tender a grace
And so loving could ever have taught it.

Then she heard a deep voice, like a terrible snore
('Twas a gnome that lived there), not far off, on the
shore,

And it said in harsh tones, "Tantalina !
Hum-er-rum ! hum-er-rum ! don't throw stones any
more

At the palace of Queen Lacrocina !''

Running home out of breath, to her mother she said,
"What is that in the lake with a voice that I dread ?

And, do tell me, who *is* Lacrocina ?''

"It is only the frogs, silly child—go to bed !''

Of strange things that night dreamed Tantalina.

Some time after she went to the lake, and the moon
Was not round as before, and the same dreadful
tune

She soon heard in the bushes begin a-
gain its “Hum, hum-er-rum! the mermaid will
come soon,

If you call for the queen, Lacrocina.”

She was scared, but she called on the mermaiden’s
name,

And it seemed that the moon to the surface soon
came—

’Twas a boat all of silver, and in it
Was a mermaid, whose gems ’twould take long but
to name,

And the girl never thought to begin it.

It was drawn by white swans, and about their necks
tied

Were the bells tinkling gaily as on they did glide.

Said the mermaiden, “Dear Tantalina,
Now jump into the boat, and we’ll take a nice ride
To the home of our queen, Lacrocina.”

It was charming to ride o'er the waters so clear,
And the bells and the mermaiden's sweet voice to
hear ;

Tantalina said, " Oh ! how delightful !"
Soon they came where a whirlpool's roar filled her
with fear,

And the wild surging waters looked frightful.

Then a cloak made of fish-scales the mermaiden
. threw

O'er the child, and a hood for her head there was
too,

'Twas to keep out the water, she told her ;
She was glad, for if she should get wet she well
knew

That her mother would certainly scold her.

They went down, away down, and around and
around,

And the waters were roaring with deafening sound,

And the scared little girl was kept busy
Holding on to the boat ; when they came to the
ground

She declared she was tired, and *so* dizzy.

They were close by a door on the floor of the lake,
And the mermaid crept out like a great long-tailed
snake,

Said the child to herself, "O, how funny !
But her face is as sweet as a piece of plum-cake,
And her smile is much sweeter than honey."

Then the door was thrown open, and both hurried
in,
When 'twas shut fast, to keep out the waters' great
din ;

Said the guide, "Here we are, Tantalina !
You may hang up your cloak on this white-fish's
fin,

Then we'll go and see Queen Lacrocina."

They now came to a door made of great fishes'
bones,
Tied with eel-skins, and studded with beautiful
stones,

And it creaked on its hinges like thunder,
When the child saw a sight, and she heard such
strange tones,

That they made her half crazy with wonder.

For there stretched out before her a splendid large
hall,

And rocks sparkling with gems made on each side a
wall,

All of diamonds glittered the ceiling ;

'Twas so glorious, the child thought she surely should
fall,

She had such a strange, rapturous feeling.

Jack-o'lanterns, like those we sometimes see in bogs,
Flitted round ; and queer gnomes that were just like
great frogs,

And looking amazingly knowing,

Were perched up on rock shelves, as though sitting
on logs,

Every one on a hollow shell blowing.

There were mermaids of all sizes sitting around
In a circle, their long black hair flowing unbound ;

On one side was the queen with her daughter ;

They were all hard at work, carving shells on the
ground,

With their long tails in great tubs of water.

Then the queen mermaid said, "We are all workers
here ;

To be useful is every one's duty, that's clear,
And a mermaid's not much of a dancer.

Bring our sister a tub, with a chair for this dear—
No, a tubful of water w'n't answer !"

Then she told such strange stories, the girl laughed
and cried,
And those tales to good children she told ere she
died—

Even when she had grown old and steady.
Soon she heard a deep voice from the ground at her
side,

And it said in loud tones, "Supper's ready !"

Then a table rose up in the centre, and there
Was a very droll supper, but dainty, and rare,—
There were clams, and all sorts of nice fishes,
And boiled lobster, and fruits most delicious and fair,
And they used pretty clam-shells for dishes.

When the supper was over, the queen mermaid said,
"Bring my carriage ! 'Tis time that this child was
in bed."

Then she took home the glad Tantalina ;
And the girl thanked the mermaid, and till she was
dead

Thought with love of good Queen Lacrocina.

VIOLA.

That's a good story ! Thank you, papa dear.
Look yonder ! Is not that a fairy ? No ;
But she is sweet enough.

A turning path had given to their view
A woman's form ; a glance which Alfred knew
Met his, and, like a long-sought blessing, gave
A tidal swell to life's receding wave.
That spirit's radiance he had felt before,
When it and music's voice one message bore ;
Its greeting then unknown, half understood
Now, promised much of wished-for future good.

The lady was a votary of the art
That can the soul's own lineaments impart
To clay and stone, and save the fleeting forms
Of grace and beauty from time's wasting storms.

She worked here, where the animating real
Helped brain and hands attain the soul's ideal.
Alfred oft came to her, and watched her mould
Her thought till finished form its beauty told.
Life budded soon with him, and blossoming
Anon, he hoped for fruits that time should bring.

VII.

Two works throw over Alfred's soul a spell,
And seem a thought he has not reached to tell.
One pictures an old tear-distilling tale,
And shows a dog whose great love did not fail,
Though by his master's rash, suspecting hand
Unjustly slain ; bleeding upon the sand
He lies, and in his trustful, upturned face
A look not far from pity keeps its place,
As pain were triumphed over : the other shows
A Christian martyr, in whose features glows
The silvery light of peace, the starry hue
Of faith's exalted triumph shining through

The clouds of agony ; there is no pride,—
No pity even,—naught that seems to chide
Man's cruelty ; the soul is raised above
The mists of passion on the hight of love.

ALFRED.

Love flowing out through wounds of piercing wrong :
It is the lesson taught by word and deed
Long ages gone, and since illustrated
In flames and all devices of fierce hate.
I feel, but cannot all accept this truth.

CLARA.

Let spirit fully apprehend, then mind
Will firmly grasp, and pass it to the heart,
Where, at the base of being, it will be
The whole soul's ordinance for will and act.

ALFRED.

Must the hard lesson still by all be conned ?
Must each one learn it by experience ?

CLARA.

It matters not how, so it be well learned.
While imperfection is, must suffering be ;
Love's sacred lore is soonest taught by pain ;
The holy thus lights the obscure. To some,
The bleeding Christ points out the way to God.

ALFRED.

Must spirit crush out heart, the beautiful
Yield to the good, till there be no more room
For gladness in our beings while earth-bound ?

CLARA.

Real beauty is the blossom of the good ;
The fruit is joy,—by that we know the tree.

ALFRED.

But this corporeal frame, the instrument
Of spirit, mind, and heart (the trinity
Of soul), must be kept holy, how ?

CLARA.

Let nothing through the body touch the soul
But what is for its good ; let spirit light
Illumine all, then all is purified.

ALFRED.

This seems a new evangel, yet most true.
But why these tortured forms, these suffering saints,
This binding law ?

CLARA.

The soul, in low states, grows through suffering ;
Freedom and excellence are reached by law.
Looking within, we see the need of strife,
Of conquest, and of anguish to this end.

ALFRED.

But art regards the beautiful alone.

CLARA.

No, art beholds truth through the beautiful,
Its radiance, and teaches men to see
The good through this, its purest medium.

ALFRED.

What special truth does your art seek to show?

CLARA.

That outward lineaments reveal the soul ;
That men may see how passion fashions them,
So highest truth and love may be their aim.

ALFRED.

And what the goal?

CLARA.

Art shall lead progress, looking back and forth,
Without, within, for types and pure ideals,
Spirit-informed, until, the end attained,
The perfect form that shows the perfect soul
Shall be the final glorious Avatar.



VIII.

RALPH TO ESTHER.

The summer has gone with its roses, Beloved ;
Light, and color, and warmth are fled ;
Beauty went out with the lamps of autumn,
And Earth lies cold on her wintry bed,
Sadly wailing, bitterly moaning,
Of birds, and flowers, and heat bereft ;
But her bosom still holds seeds of comfort,
And buds, the hopes of spring, are left.

Beloved, you are far away,
And here in the turbulent city I dwell,
Its noisy billows round me swell,
And gone are joy, and summer, and day.
But my window high sees a bit of the blue,
The tender blue, and the polar star ;
One tells of love, eternal and true,
One twinkles hope from a realm afar ;—
And love, and hope, and you are here,
With memories of the gladsome year.

Many-colored memory holds—
Like autumn, or the gorgeous folds
Of clouds above the sunset's glare—
All that's rich, and all that's fair,
All that's joyous, sweet, and dear
In the day and in the year ;
Boundless love is over all,
And flows through rifts in the sapphire wall ;
Moonlike hope's pure silvery light
Shows joy eternal, infinite ;
In thee, O rainbow Soul ! all blend,—
Of memory, love, and hope the end.

Your sunny being, Beloved,
Fills the air with warmth and light,
And the heavens are vocal with gladness,
Though the birds have taken flight.
I lie in a trance embalmed with you,
Yours my spirit tingling through,
As music soft, or rare perfume
Floats through a dimly-curtained room.
The air is a rose-tinted, golden mist,
Bordered with purest amethyst,

Fading in light to the quivering stars
That pierce the whole with diamond bars :
Still, and rich, and warm it is,
The very atmosphere of bliss,—
Still, but living ; purest soul
Is the essence of the whole.
Suffused in liquid joy I lie,
Thrilling, panting,—could I die,
I should be part of it, and you—
All one with the bright, the sweet, the true.

O purple soul ! O golden heart !
O scarlet love ! I dwell apart,
And say to the clay world, Touch me not,
For Love my blessed soul has got
Above your highest mountain-peak ;
But I can hear your dwellers speak,—
Some bless, some curse, and all seem base
To whom Love shows her unveiled face.
Yet, from my gorgeous sunset cloud,
I'll sing to cheer you, but not loud ;
I will sing soft, and sweet, and clear,
Songs which the loving only shall hear,
Strains which shall drop on your face like dew,—
Like starlight smiles across the blue ;—

And you shall dream of Eden again,
And children shall shout, and women and men
Look up and pray, who never before
Knew where to seek for the pearly door.

But Oh, how long, how long
Is the vista of the beautiful !

How high the mount of song !
And my senses are so very dull
That I scarce can see the toilsome way,
And I sit in the gloom and cannot pray.
Stern Art has brought me down from the high
Where Love had placed in the arms of Delight,
And I am sad and cold again ;
And a line of marble gods and men
Stretches away to the jewelled fane
Where the rainbow-garmented Muses reign.
This is the path my feet must tread,
Through pools of tears, among ghosts of the dead,
Who gibber their warnings of doubt and fate,
Jealousy, falsehood, envy, and hate ;
But the marble statues, calm and pale,
Look, "Aspiration cannot fail."

The way of the artist's the way of the saint,
And I must walk it, though bleeding and faint :
Love holds not, but impels to go
Through flood and fire, through rain and snow,
And in fiercest storm and darkest night
Love can make it a path of delight.

Away ! I will be happy now.
I veil Ambition's marble brow,
And lay the chisel down, and gaze
On painted Love, with the rosy haze
Around her glowing form ; her eyes
Thrill me with burning memories
Of summer fields, and golden hours,
And trilling birds, and joy-dyed flowers,—
The brook, the river, and the wood,
The sunset, and the purple flood
Of evening thinned with starry white,
And you, of all the life and light !

O Love, my Love forevermore !
I stand on an island, and on each shore
Beyond are you : one is the strand
Of memory with golden sand,

And I lie at your feet, and pant with hope ;
Ruby-pebbled banks upslope
On the other side, where Eden is,
And where glow the fruits of perfect bliss.
And here, in primal innocence,
Through delicatest nerves of sense,
Our souls shall blend, and life shall move
Harmonious to the notes of love.

O sweetest Sweet ! thyself art here,
With the sunshine of the year ;
Warmly beam thy rays on me,
Perfect joy in purity ;
And my quickened soul, I know,
True and straight shall upward grow.
Truth is seen through love alone ;
In thy clearest soul, my Own,
I see my soul, as in thine eye
Mine outer self floats joyously :
And seeing thus my soul I see
Its lack to be good, great, and free ;
But in thy purest spirit air
It yet shall grow most tall and fair.

IX.

Love grew in Alfred's heart, until he heard
From crimson lips beloved the golden word
Of ecstasy. Did he not love before
One whom he vowed to cherish evermore?
And is not love eternal? Love is true,
It cannot lie, and it is fresh and new,
Though forms that held it sleep beneath the sod.
But love unerring comes direct from God,
And enters chosen souls; if it depart,
'Tis plain there was a void within the heart—
Some part not all transformed with it—for when
A soul is filled it never thirsts again.

Alfred and Ralph watched for time's hand to mark,
With shine and shadow, one day to embark
On wedlock's tide, and in quaternion
Of bliss let love's glad breezes waft them on.
Alfred's great love was strong, and calm, and high—
A pine that neared and pointed toward the sky,
Cheerfully green in winter as in spring,
But with a tender, solemn murmuring,

Feeling the vast space 'twixt the heavens and earth,
How tall soe'er it grew. Ralph's had its birth
From many seeds, and was a thicket wild,—
Young elms and willows, with clematis mild
And grape-vines overgrowing ; underneath,
Patches of sweet grass for the tender teeth
Of lambs and rabbits ; flowers bloom here and there,
Birds flit and sing, and elfin paths there are
Through tangled brushwood ; fauns and fairies play,
Where no unreverent foot should ever stray.
This for the summer ; but the heavens send
Not only light and showers, but gales that rend
The frost-nipt leaves from shuddering twigs, and
throw
O'er all bleak ruin's mantle of cold snow.

The day nears fast, blown on by longing sighs ;
At Esther's home the glad festivities
To crown the marriage rites that bless the four
Shall launch the new year from a golden shore.
Meantime, in Ralph's breast expectation burns
So fiercely, its fomenting essence turns
Hope into doubt ; he thinks, " It cannot be
Such ecstasy is ever meant for me."

Fool ! all God's gifts are free, and hope is real,
Faith-based, to those who will not think, but feel.
He knows not that along the wire of love
His stronger soul has power hers to move,
Through perfect sympathy, however far,
And with its influence to bless or mar.
It had been thus since first in girlhood's hour,
She felt that gleaming soul's o'erwhelming power ;
His moods of joy and sadness—even those
Of changing seasons—were her friends or foes,
And, ignorant of the cause, she often wept
Or thrilled for him, unknowing, and while she slept
His spirit guided hers. An evil mood—
For he had such—could not o'ercome the good
In her, but woman's clearer moral sense
Made hers in this the stronger influence.
But now their larger love and strong desire
His nature make for hers a wasting fire ;
He sometimes doubts her love, distrusts his fate,—
His eager, thirsting passion cannot wait,
And drives her with intoxicating might,
Staggering and helpless to the gulf of night.

Ralph, all aflame with love which fear makes pale,
Clara and Alfred, whom no doubts assail,

Reach Esther's home. That self-same morning found
Her chamber vacant, and no sight or sound
Of her is yielded, but a paper placed
Upon her table, scrawled as if in haste,
And Ralph reads, seeing burst the flames of hell,
These searing words, "I love you not. Farewell!"

And she is gone, but why and whither? Maids
Have reached thick darkness, through temptation's
shades,

With rapid foot—no power preventing them,—
So willess we think Heaven can scarce condemn.
No nuptials now : three that were to be blest,
Vow that all other hopes and cares shall rest
Till she is found, restored, if that may be,
Or known to sleep from earthly peril free.

At first Ralph's raging heart roamed every path
Of hate to find a victim for its wrath ;
Not of its own will could that soul so true
Have turned from heaven's purest light, he knew ;
And he would find the tempter, and let flow
His passion's fury in the cleaving blow
Or lightning bullet,—for the obvious flood
To wash out hate for such a wrong is blood.

Hard, hard it was the scourge of wrath to flee,
But effort changed his rage to agony.
Hate drove him to the regions of despair—
A rayless, voiceless, thick, but living air,
The essence of all horror, and so dread
That sheeted ghosts of the unresting dead
Would have relieved its gloom: he rushed towards
death,—

Death quick and violent, with panting breath
And shrieks for aid. Death kindly took his hand,
And led him to the border of the land
Of rest, where he was calmed, and where he met
Sweet Love, who took him back to life and set
His feet on her firm rock. Long time he lay
In the still twilight, waiting the full day
Of flowing life which soon came with new power
And holier light to tinge each future hour.

Now sorrow melts in love; his bleeding heart
Would water even the wayside flowers that start
From seeds of passion, wafted by the winds
Of lawlessness; the mist of pity blinds
His eyes that they see not the hideous form
Of vice, but far above the raging storm

His soul darts heart-warm rays to brighten grief,
And dye the sere, frost-stricken autumn leaf.
He seeks in squalid city ways the dens
Of want and guilt, whose wretched denizens
Have reached, or never risen from the tomb
Of truth, where love-beams scarcely pierce the gloom.
He brings to them a sorrow-perfumed air,
That wakes to blossom every germ of prayer
In hearts where good has lain unsunned by hope.
He seeks those higher on the easy slope
Of degradation ; artificial flies,
Sharp-hooked, that though like love are painted lies.
Some that knew not how far they were from truth,
Ralph touched with purity made sweet by ruth,
And helped to see the sorrow-gated way,
Christ-broadened to admit even such as they.
No fear that he would let a soul defiled
Touch his and soil it ; loving like a child,
All impulse, scarce could he endure the touch
Of even finger-tips that brought too much
Of lower natures through the nerves to his.
To passive souls in impure air there is
A tainting power, but love is without fear
When active, making its own atmosphere.

In all the tangled paths through which he strayed
Ralph sought his lost, but still beloved maid ;
If even the saddest form he saw were she,
His love would clothe her in fair purity,
And set her on his spirit's highest throne,
Who surely might be his if Heaven's own,
Redeemed from error, and recalled from woe :
And he would save, though he must sadly go
Through tedious life to bitter death, and far
Through lightless space to every circling star.

X.

RALPH IN THE MEADOWS.

O love, from the burning heart of day !
All hues of beauty are in each ray,
And each is a kiss that thrills through earth,
And warms some form of joy to birth.

O Nature, sweet and loving bride !
Again I sit at thy faithful side,
And gaze upon thy flushing charms,
Or clasp thee in my longing arms.

Ever true and tender thou,
Though sorrow darken thy pure brow,
And thou weep, or shiver, sad and drear,
O'er the glowing coals of the dying year.
Thy love henceforth shall suffice for me,
With the worship of star-crowned Poesie.
O beaming Goddess ! once again,
I bow within thy sacred fane ;
My life, my hopes, my soul are thine,—
Relume me with thy flame divine !
Set thy crown of thorns on my bleeding brow,
And bind me with thy holiest vow !

THE BOBOLINK.

Love, love, love !
See the Spring's golden eye
Beaming love from the sky,
And the hours,
Crowned with flowers,
O'er the fields dancing ;
Music is glancing
From flower-kissed plain, and from light-sprinkled
river,
While ripples of joy through the balmy air quiver.

Come, come, come !
My beautiful, beautiful !
All the green earth is dull
 Without love ;
 From above
Love-rays descending
 With flower-smiles are blending,
For light is but longing, and color emotion,
And beauty the waves of love's space-filling ocean.

Sweet, sweet, sweet !
Life has no joy for me
Without love, without thee.
 Come, my sweet,
 Let us meet ;
Flitting and trilling,
Loving and thrilling,
Pure gems of delight through the ether shall shower,
And rainbows of glory arch over our bower.

RALPH.

Love, love, the song that gladness sings,
And longing sighs, and sunlight flings,
That color echoes, birds rehearse,—
The music of the universe !

Again upon my soul returns
Thy power, and life rekindled burns.
Ay, let me love with loving skies,
And sing with all earth's harmonies !
The fount of joy is ever full,
Why should my heart be bare and dull ?
No warmth or light is ever lost,
The loving soul no gifts exhaust ;
Then let my best be freely given,
Renewed with better still from heaven.

VIOLA.

O, here you are ! I've looked for you so long.

RALPH.

What do you want ?

VIOLA.

Dinner is almost ready ; we're to have
Such a nice pudding. Aren't you glad of that ?

RALPH.

Do you not think that there are better things
Than puddings in the world ?

VIOLA.

When we are hungry they are good enough.

RALPH.

But here are things that I like better now.

VIOLA.

O, yes: I dearly love the birds and flowers.
Do hear that bobolink; how sweet he sings!
I heard a whole tree full of them one day;
All sang at once, and scattered music like
A rain of diamonds on a silver roof,
Aunt Esther said.

RALPH.

Ah!

VIOLA.

Why do you look so sad? It is so bright,
You should be happy; everything else is.

RALPH.

We can be sad sometimes with too much sweet.
Did eating candy never make you sick?

VIOLA.

Why, yes ; I did not think of that. But now
I want you to look happy. Shall I tell
A story that I learned to-day ?

RALPH.

Yes, if you will, while we walk towards home.

VIOLA.

It is about

THE FAIRY'S FLOWER.

By the river's side, in a cozy bower,
Grew the fairy's beautiful flower.

It was her daughter, the fairy said,
And to give it life her heart had bled.

Her side one day a cruel thorn
Had pierced, and thus the flower was born

Of the stream that flowed from the frightful wound,
And warmed and quickened the cold, damp ground.

So much of her life was in the flower
That the fairy languished for many an hour ;

But the blossom grew so wondrous fair
That the winds told of it everywhere ;

And all the birds beneath the skies
Came and looked on it with longing eyes,

And filled with music the fragrant grove,
Trying to win the flower's love ;

The thrush, the bobolink, and redbreast
Vied with each other, and sang their best.

Beauty she gave them, and perfume, too,
But not her heart of honey-dew ;

And when their flight too closely neared
Her petals closed, for their touch she feared ;

It would soil her brightness, and no rain,
She knew, could wash her pure again.

A humming-bird came on busy wing ;
Humble he was, for he could not sing.

Murmuring tenderly, straight he goes
To the flower, whose petals do not close

To the green- and ruby-coated elf,
Who loves her more than he does himself,

And has learned so well love's sacred lore,
He can reach and not harm her being's core.

She opens her heart to his delicate bill,
And of richest nectar he drinks his fill.

RALPH.

The daintiest touches wake divinest tones ;
God speaks the clearest with his softest voice.
Once more I go to seek the lost, my way
Illumined now by hope from cloudless skies.

XI.

Mad with power that wakes our wonder, swift with
clatter, clash, and thunder
Rush the steam-inspired, life-bearing cars along the
guiding rail ;
'Tis the iron law that binds them, that so narrowly
confines them
Keeps off Death who hovers round and round with
face so fiercely pale ;
For this speed almost outflies him, and this daring
power defies him,
And the lightnings, once his vassals, now are servile
unto man,
Their old master calmly scorning, of his plans they
give quick warning,—
He'll outwit and be revenged upon his rival, if he
can.

Calm and tender, as half dreaming, fleeting smiles
across them beaming,
Nature's swiftly-changing features greet with love our
earnest gaze ;

Over river, hill, and meadow, sparkling light and
flitting shadow

Skip, and melt in purple distance with the skies en-
chanted haze.

Unrestrained, creative fancy, with its daring necro-
mancy,

Builds fair cottages and villas by each river and each
brook ;

Sees in all sweet smiling faces, fairies dance in shady
places,

Maidens muse, or poets dream in every lonely, bow-
ered nook.

But the engine's fiendish screaming scares the shapes
of fancy's dreaming,

For the noisy hosts of science are imagination's foes,
But poetic song and story shall endure in undimmed
glory,

For the beautiful lives with the soul, and goes where'er
it goes.

How this grasping tyrant science chains earth's mighty
struggling lions,

Breaking up their forest jungles, making pathways
through their lair ;

Sends the lightnings through the ocean, trusts the
 raging wave's devotion,
Even ventures to invade the realms of still uncon-
 quered air.
Finding earth for his ambition quite too narrow, man's
 volition
Pierces every secret cavern of the boundless universe,
O'er the circumscribing real leaps his unrestrained
 ideal,
Clutches thunderbolts of knowledge, fearing no ex-
 ploding curse ;
Far beyond the bourne material still aspires his flight
 ethereal—
Not alone by trammelled sense will he laboriously
 plod—
O'er the bounds of faith careering, into nature keenly
 peering,
Or his own soul closely searching, he dares to try to
 find out God.
What he seeks he must discover, Truth repels no ear-
 nest lover,
As God liveth, so his essence is in every soul re-
 vealed ;

Of the omnipresent Spirit something we must each
inherit

Which can hear his lightest tones as though his voice
in thunder pealed.

Each soul-nerve with Him is thrilling, and, uncon-
sciously or willing,

Each but feels or moves as he directs who is the
guiding brain :

This material condition, helped or marred by our
volition,

Makes this life a rainbow, dyed with hues of plea-
sure and of pain.

But the soul in future ages shall pass on to higher
stages,

Sphered in ever purer substance, wheeling nearer to
the sun,

Less and less shall know of sadness, more and more
shall feel of gladness,

Till the perfect state is reached where it, and joy,
and God are one.

While we journey here in blindness, soul may lighten
soul with kindness,

Till rays of all combined shall make the world with
gladness bright ;

Hands fraternal hands are grasping, lovers thrill with
dearer clasping,—
Souls commune through the material, by touch, and
sound, and sight :
And when this one life is over, we shall meet each
friend and lover,—
Fairer forms and finer senses then shall look, and
speak, and kiss ;
We will journey toward perfection, smoothing out sad
recollection,—
An eternity of progress and of ever-growing bliss.

Steam-borne rides Ralph across the furrowed land,
And sees Love wave to him a beckoning hand.
Far towards the western wave his course has been,
Still driven by the impetuous soul within,
And seeking his one pearl which he knew not
If earth or some more blessed sphere had got.
Alfred has sent these words on lightning wings,
“ Come, she is found,” and hope again upsprings
And floods the arid desert of his heart,
While withered plants of life re-quickened start.

The treacherous Night now curtains o’er the scene,
And grim, vindictive Death behind her screen

Lays warily his snares ; the rushing train,
With all its load, down the steep rocks amain
He hurls to swift destruction, and calls fire
To aid in wreaking his fierce hate's desire
On forms clutched by relentless agony,
The while he dances in un pitying glee.

XII.

Weak, maimed from conflict with man's direful foe,
Ralph lies, while life's returning waters flow
And move his stranded hopes. Beside his bed,
A trinal guard against returning dread,
Clara, and Alfred, and his Esther stand,
This wan as if just sent from shadow-land.

RALPH.

Reason, and life, and you returned at once ;
This pain, these crippled limbs the final price,
And with all former anguish not too much.

ESTHER.

And knowest thou for what?

RALPH.

I look in thy true eyes, and feel thee safe,
And know that will has yielded in my soul
To see thee happy and rejoice, although
More worthy arms than mine enfold thy bliss.

ESTHER.

My brother, speak!

ALFRED.

We found her in a maniac's cell. The hour
That did you harm sent reason back to her,
But with sharp torture and a quaking shriek;
And after-illness brought her near to death.
She knows not how or why she left her home,
Or what befell till madness rolled away.

ESTHER.

But this I know; the darkness in thy soul
That shadowed mine is gone, and both are clear,

And mine says firmly what it said before,
I love thee, love thee, Ralph,—have ever loved,—
And canst thou take a wanderer, I am thine.

RALPH.

I give nor také not, for our souls are one,—
Mine purified, its mist dispelled from thine ;
Love has been perfected by grief and pain.

CLARA.

You find that suffering profits, then ?

RALPH.

It profits, and it ever will, to learn
The truth through any medium of good.

ALFRED.

But love being perfect, now we may rejoice.

RALPH.

Yes, for we know at length our souls are free,
For we have suffered and have conquered self.

CLARA.

When was that conquest gained by you ?

RALPH.

When everything was yielded up to truth ;
When my soul asked no more, but was content
To rest and grow in that eternal light,
Knowing that all its needs will be supplied.

ALFRED.

We take this truth with us to sunniest skies—
To Italy, my bride and I, and hope
Through Art to find an unoppressed ideal.

CLARA.

One sweetest lesson is already learned,
We think ; that undimmed bliss may come through
 love,
Its medium, if it be purified
By any means : but this we must believe,—
The everlasting is the only real.





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